

I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO
FORGET ABOUT THE ATRIUM BLIMPS —
TOO CROWDED!



The Amateur Press Association
by and for
the members of General Technics
(to first-order)

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* * *

This has been a doubly gratifying month for the APA. The first issue under the new monthly schedule received far more than the minimum number of pages I wished to send out. I hope that this arrangement will help to build up the level of activity here, since there will be more issues available for your 'zines. The other pleasing development was the financial situation. While I was at Atlanta, I had \$70 pressed upon me from various members, so that there are very few people still in debt at the present writing.

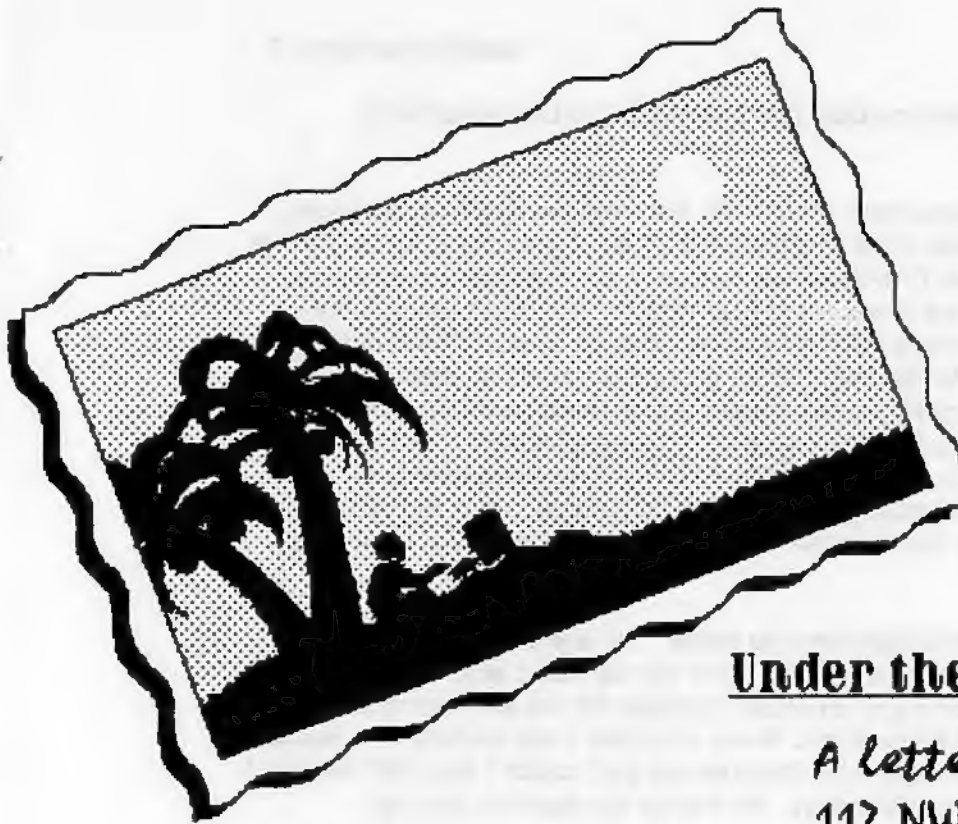
Unfortunately, this makes another decision more difficult. So far, I have only received votes stating that we should leave the copy count at 30. If you check the Roster, you will note that our membership now sits at exactly that number (no "spec" copies, folks!). So, if any new members want to join up, we probably will be forced to drop the Unresponsive among us. I would propose doing so first to those who also owe money, but there's hardly anyone left who fits that description. Here are the people who are in Imminent Peril, along with the last issue they appeared in:

John Frambach, Dick Smith [29]; Al Duester, Jamie Hanrahan [35];
Andy Anda, Hugh Daniel, Tullio Proni [36]; Sheila Groves,
Kiran Wagle [joined at 38, still not heard from]

No less than five people said to me at ConFederation, "I know I haven't sent anything in, but it's really interesting to read, so I wanna still get it." Then they handed me more money (Pyro should have such problems...). I'd like to say to those folks that your interest is appreciated, but the other people who contribute want to hear from you. It's easy to rescue yourself: just send something in next month (goad, goad). Yes, that's right -- it's "Ritual Public Humiliation" Time!!

Since we are on a monthly schedule, I will make every effort to get my issues in the mail by the 8th of the month (GTB has already been doing so). Sorry about the delay on #42; I don't expect to be rushing on a paper every time, fortunately. All right, it's back to Kalamazoo next month. See you here in November!

Shal.



Under the Bunya-Bunya Tree

*A letter from David D. Levine
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for APA-TECH #43 (?)*

Dear Shalmaneser & Co.:

My, it has been a long time since I've written, hasn't it! Looking back over past APA-TECHs, I see that I've left you woefully out of date with regards to my personal life. Methinks a little history is in order.

When last I wrote, I was just about to transfer from the floundering Graphics Workstation Division (*né* Engineering Computing Systems division) of Tektronix to the Computer Aided Engineering Systems division (*né* Logic Design Systems division). (In Tek shorthand, I left GWD [formerly ECS] for CAE [formerly LDS]. Got that? There'll be a quiz later.)

The CAE Systems Division of Tektronix was created when Tek was desperate to get into the apparently-lucrative CAE marketplace and unhappy with the progress of its own LDS division. Tek bought CAE Systems, Inc. of Santa Clara for an incredible amount of money, scrapped several years of work by LDS, and merged LDS, CAE Systems, Inc., and another small company recently acquired by Tek together to form CAE Systems Division. I think they were hoping for some sort of hybrid-vigor effect. (None of this is Company Confidential, by the way; it has been written up in the trade press.)

Well, it hasn't worked so far. The management style of the little start-up CAE Systems Inc. did not blend well with the style of 40-year-old Tektronix, which is invariably referred to in the papers as "the Beaverton, Ore., electronics giant." CAE Systems people are much more interested in the immediate payoff, and they tend to be cocky; Tek's motto is "Committed to Excellence," and the management is rather laid-back when it comes to schedules and budgets. You may have heard the maxim that "the structure and style of a software product reflects the management of the people who produced it." In my experience, it's dead accurate. Because of this, merging CAE Systems' products with the former LDS products and bringing them up to Tek's quality standards has taken a long time, and isn't through yet. If you're in or near the CAE field, you know what Tek promised at the Design Automation

Conference (DAC) two years ago, and you know how much (little) of that has actually appeared.

Anyway, I came into a situation where there was friction between two management styles, and it was particularly evident to me in the relationship between my manager (of the former LDS) and his manager (of the former CAE Systems). Basically, my manager's manager did what he wanted to do, whether or not it was reasonable or right, and didn't listen to my manager at all. He was trying to force a Tek writing group into the *modus operandi* of a small start-up: everything had to be cheaper, faster, and, most important, done *his* way. The thing he did that gave me the most trouble was trying to get us off our UNIX system (with powerful editors, text-processing tools, electronic mail, instant access to important engineering documents, and 24-hour support) to cheap PC clones (with MS-Word, no networking, and no support). I was constantly amazed by his ignorance and false economies; he didn't seem to care that quality and morale were dropping, only how much money we spent.

Other CAE Systems management practices were no better. For one thing, shortly after I joined, an order came down from On High in Santa Clara that we would work 44-hour weeks (we had the choice of Saturday morning or Saturday afternoon for the extra time) to get a major system release out the door by deadline. Never mind that I was working on a product scheduled for the release after that, and extra hours on my part couldn't help that release; I still had to give up half of each of my Saturdays. We missed the deadline, anyway. Schedules were always Draconian and were never met. ("Always winter and never Christmas," as Ellen used to say.)

Meanwhile, Mother Tek was looking a little shaky. There were slowdowns, hiring freezes, pay freezes, rumors of layoffs. Eventually I could take it no more. I let it be known that I was "looking." Within a month, I had an interview with Intel (the advantages of knowing people in the industry... the local electronics companies are an incestuous lot); they made me an offer, I accepted, I gave notice, I finished my manual at CAE Systems in a blaze of 14-hour days, and I left. I had worked for CAE Systems for just over six months. (Even so, in that time I rewrote an entire manual, doubling its size and improving its quality tremendously. I finish what I start.)

I haven't regretted my decision (much). Between the time I gave notice and the time I left, my boss left for Mentor Graphics. Less than a month after that, another writer left, also for Mentor; this reduced the group from five writers and a manager to three writers, when Tek was under a serious hiring freeze. A few months ago, Tek had enormous layoffs. I was glad I'd gotten out, even though CAE division was not affected.

Still, Intel is a bit rigid. You are supposed to be at your desk at 8 AM sharp, there's a guard at the door who checks your briefcase on the way out, and schedules are God. I made my decision on this basis: I was willing to give up some personal freedom in exchange for strong direction, commitment, and responsibility on the part of my management. I hate being jerked around. I also have more confidence that the project I am working on will ship, and on time. In the two and a half years I worked at Tek, nothing I wrote was seen by real customers. Projects were cancelled, or schedules slipped off to infinity; I want the satisfaction of getting my work before the public. (I've heard that my BASIC manuals have actually gone out to customers since I left, but sales of the product are poor. *Sigh*) Also, the money's much better.

Oh, I left something out: after I got the offer from Intel, but before I accepted it, I managed to get an interview with Will Vinton Productions, home of *Claymation* (TM of Will Vinton). I crafted some clay sculptures to serve as a résumé, but they (and I) were rejected; Vinton needs professional sculptors who can be taught to animate, not animation fans who can be taught to sculpt. Oh well. Maybe someday.

Speaking of Will Vinton, did anybody out there catch *The Adventures of Mark Twain*? I didn't think so. This flawed, but spectacular, film is the first full-length Claymation feature. Unfortunately, the distributor had no faith in it, and released it as part of a kiddie-flick package (including *The Care Bears Movie*). The critics all agreed it was much too intense and cerebral for little kids, but the publicity scared adults away, so nobody who saw it liked it (except those, such as myself, who already knew what it was and had been waiting for it for years). It played only one week here in Portland, and it got *no* publicity. I saw it in a theatre with *one* other family. I understand that in other cities it played *only* as a matinee, and got evening performances in Portland only because Will Vinton is a Local Boy who Made Good. Mind you, I wouldn't give the picture five stars, but it deserved much better than it got. Damn the money men anyway! Why can't they leave the creative people alone?

Lest it seem that everything is bleak, let me point out that all this happened six months ago and I'm very happy now. I have settled nicely into my new job, I'm very interested in what I'm writing about (a certain 1970's operating system, with a twist I cannot explain for corporate-security reasons), I'm on schedule, and I feel productive and secure (if a bit on the overworked side). I was elected President of the Portland SF Society in April, and I haven't been impeached yet; I'm Programming Chair of OryCon again, having learned from my mistakes last year, but not enough to stop; I'm going to Worldcon, where I plan to deliver this zine to Greg; and I'm very much in love. Her name is Kate Yule, we're living together, and she was elected Treasurer of the SF club at the same time I was elected President... a cozy relationship to say the least. We've been going out since January 1 of last year, and Worldcon will be the first time since then we've spent two weekends in a row apart (she's out of town this weekend for a reunion). We've been told we're a disgustingly cute couple.

Hmm, that last paragraph is the last six months in a nutshell. It just goes to show that I always write more about trauma than about the happy times. When times are bad, I write egobabble. When times are good, I write mailing comments (or I don't write at all). Speaking of which, now that I'm all caught up to the good times, I should do some

Mailing Comments

Donna: Some days it seems like everybody I know is getting married, or pregnant, or both! Would yours be the first child born into GT? (Naw, can't be... well, maybe it is!) Your request for suggestions of names gave Kate and I an amusing evening, but we mostly came up with names you'd want to avoid like the plague. (E.g. "Accident" Proni, "Polo" Proni.) I did come up with one that sounds nice, and is unusual, but isn't too weird — Emilio. (Just don't use that with the middle name "Lizardo.") Best of luck! // Re yct Barry, I got a check from Windycon last month, and I wasn't even expecting one!! Sure, I sat in on the GT panel, but that was a last-minute deal and I didn't expect anything from it. I suppose it just goes to show that if you don't expect anything you'll never be disappointed.

Re "dropping dead weight," let me say this: while I haven't written anything for APA-TECH in the last year, I recently wrote my 25th zine for TAPS, The Terrean Amateur Press Society (and published it for the second time). I think the major difference is motivation: if I don't write every other month for TAPS, I know I'll get dropped, whereas every issue of APA-TECH that goes by without a contribution from me is just a tiny pang of guilt. Go ahead and boot out the deadwood; it will only improve the APA. I know that I'd write more under the threat of being dropped for lackativity. Just make a firm statement of what is minimum acceptable activity, and stick to it. If necessary, we can create "subscriptions," for those who want to read but not contribute, and have them subsidize the extra costs of non-contributing members.

Re "don't die:" Sorry, but that phrase leaves me cold. Not dying is something we all try to do anyway, and are all doomed to fail. "Have a nice day," banal though it is, at least suggests something that the recipient can do something about (attitude being a major component of

happiness)... "Don't die" serves only to remind me of my own mortality, and the best response I can give to it is "Well, I'll try, but I can't make any promises."

Linda: Oh, the excitement and glamor (and terror) of living in a foreign country! I can get culture shock by going into any of the Chinese, Japanese, Thai, or even German specialty markets around here... I can imagine what it must be like to live in an environment like that. How long will you be trying to get along without the language? // I find your zine absolutely fascinating. Please write more!

Eric: Boy, you make yourself sound like a typical sailor. Flirting with girls, getting drunk, going to nude beaches, climbing on cathedrals, going to strip joints and throwing beer around... where do you find time for fanac? What do you do to stay sane while being treated like a "mindless piece of matter?"

Tim: Interesting parallel to Eric's zine.

Barry: Got any tips on working with underlings? My bosses have hired me a clerical person to help with the documentation effort (she starts Monday). I always feel odd telling another human being to do something that's too boring and time-consuming for me to want to do, but that's exactly why she's there. I suppose one gets used to it. I hope so, anyway. // Text editors, like languages and operating systems, are a religious issue. My personal deities are WordStar and Emacs. Actually, the editor I use at work is a highly-personalized hybrid: Emacs with WordStar's control sequences and features added. That's why I like Emacs, you can do *anything* with it! At home, I use MacWrite, which is wonderful for personal correspondence, but I'd hate to have to write anything major with it. None of the Mac word-processors have anything near the power I need from a professional editing tool. // Re yct Rod, about celebrity grammar checkers: once again, life beats art to the punch; you can already buy "Doug Clapp's Word Tools" for the Mac. I Kid You Not.

Hmm, it's after midnight. Better put this thing (and me) to bed.

All the best,



David D. Levine

Oh, about my title: The Bunya-Bunya is a real tree. It's actually more a pine than a palm. I forget where it's from originally, but it was imported to this country some years ago. The problem with Bunya-Bunyas is that they have Bunya-Bunya Cones. Once every five years, the Bunya-Bunya fruits, dropping Bunya-Bunya Cones on the populace. A Bunya-Bunya Cone resembles a pine cone, but is as large as a bowling ball, nearly as heavy, and *pointy*, and they fall from as much as 60 feet! The Bunya-Bunya expert on NPR's *All Things Considered* said that as far as he knew nobody had been killed or hurt by falling Bunya-Bunya Cones, but that a California municipality had to put up barriers to prevent people from parking under them... the city got tired of paying for damage to cars. I swear I am not making this up.

Anyway, the title "Under the Bunya-Bunya Tree" is a lovely self-decapitating phrase... sounds pleasant enough, but it's actually more reminiscent of the Sword of Damocles than shady palms. It does not describe my current situation in any way; I just liked it. The postcard image at the top of Page 1 was just what came into my head when I thought about the title. See you on the Funway! — DDL

Production Notes: This zine was produced entirely on an Apple Macintosh Plus and Imagewriter printer, using the venerable combination of MacPaint and MacWrite. The headline font is Liverpool; the body font is Denali (a creation of a local Mac-Hacker); the "handwriting" on page 1 is a font called Tokyo. Now if only it did multitasking...

What I Did On My Vacation -- Really!

Rolf Wilson

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Two months of vacation. Paid. Nowhere I had to go. Can you imagine anything more relaxing? If it had only worked out that way...

Well, I did have two months of vacation - actually 47.5 days. Comes of working for the university, which gives me 2 days of vacation every month, while Mary gets only 10 every year. I tended to take vacation only when she did, and it just piled up... During the last year, I had been taking a week every now and then just to work on the house, because that can use up any amount of time. So, in January, when the various departments who paid for the Image Processing Center decided that it was too expensive to pay for an old VAX 11/780 instead of each buying nifty new MicroVax II's, they told me that my job was going away. They also told me to use up all my vacation before I left. I would have rather been paid for it, but they did have a point that I had 7 months warning. I began to look for jobs, and it came down to 3. Gould Software Division, a videotape project that my present employers were starting up, and a computer graphics job at the State Geological Survey. Gould looked like a very nice place to work. Brian Marick and Joan Eslinger have worked there for some time, and like it. But their personnel office is lacking. In 3 months after I interviewed there, they were unable to make up their minds whether or not to offer me a job. I've been told that they also sometimes forget to tell people when they decide to hire them, then wonder why they don't show up. So much for them. The Computing Services Office was starting up a project that allow campus users to create high-quality videotapes from computer data in any of the 3 major formats. Sounded like a lot of fun, and I wouldn't have to use up all that vacation. The guy running the project wanted me, and they told him it was "95% certain" that the funding was there. Sounds good, but anyone who has ever played D&D knows that low-probability chances can come true at the worst time. So - no dice. I called up the Geological Survey, accepted their offer, then went to find out how far in advance of August 20th I should start my vacation in order to use it all up. Well, I had not been keeping very good track - I had already worked about a day of it. Sort of sudden, it was. I said goodbye to a couple of people and went home. Seemed like a very strange way to leave a job, or maybe the other way around. I wasn't allowed to start early at my next job, because they are both for the state, and that would mean that I would be getting paid 200% for awhile, which look very bad in accounting somewhere. Forced to take 2 months of vacation, with pay. The world just isn't fair sometimes.

One major project - our downstairs kitchen. This involved tearing off a back porch, digging a hole for footings, then getting a new foundation built so that we could add this area in, giving us a nice-sized kitchen. Digging the hole was ok - hard work, but nothing complex. Pouring the cement into it was more of the same. Only afterwards did I find that I had made a mistake. I had made the hole the right size - 36 inches deep and 16

inches wide. What I did not know is that usually, only about a foot of cement is put in the bottom of the hole to spread the weight. The rest is constructed of cement blocks. A three-story apartment building only needs a foot of solid cement footing. The back corner of my kitchen now has THREE feet of solid cement under it, somewhat more appropriate for an airplane hanger, or something like that. It's a good joke on me - I'm always saying that things aren't made strong enough...

One of the problems has been that the schedule of the carpenters who have been doing the framing in the kitchen fell right into the last part of my vacation. So all this has been going on right before I go back to work AND get ready for Worldcon, where we are doing another trivia contest. Not to mention a sudden medical problem in the family. So I ended my wonderfully long vacation run to a frazzle.

In between, there was plenty of rest and fun. In late July, we had our annual "Thanksgiving in July", which has been getting bigger every year. Jerry Corrigan, Jim Detry, Bill Higgins, Bill Leininger, Andy Anda and Annette all made it down from Chicago. This year, the count was up to 27 people. We haven't reached the limit of the house yet, but this thing has been getting better every year. Since it was held in the middle of a horrible heat wave, we worried that everyone would die of heat, but we set up 5 large fans to pull air through the house all night before and cool it down, and moved 2 window air conditioners in. We all survived. The house is big and stays cool - until it starts hitting high 90's with overnight lows that aren't. Maybe someday we will have central air.

Actually, I finally did go somewhere during my vacation. I went to Rochester, Minnesota to visit David Marquart. This was quite a risk. The two previous times I tried this, my car broke down. But it behaved well this time, and rolled over 100,000 miles on the way back. Not bad for a Chevette. I watched the digits carefully as they rolled up to 99,999.9. Just as they changed to zeros, the car was filled with a deep roaring noise. I began to wonder if I had the "well-built Chevette" that was going to fall to pieces all at once! Then I noticed that I had slowed down while watching the odometer, and was blocking the path of a large truck, causing him to lean on his horn in annoyance.

I've only just started my new job, but I've done something useful already. I unplugged one of their computers. They had an old PDP 11/10 (I mean old) that was supposed to do something or other, and hadn't for some time. The previous programmer had wasted much time in an attempt to get it to work. Meanwhile, it just sat there using up money keeping it maintained.

This is being done in a great hurry, but I have time for one mailing comment. Rod, when you were talking about the "Marching Morons", I think you missed the point. It wasn't an argument based on race (unless you consider uneducated people a race) It was saying that things had changed from the historical norm of successful people having more children (or at least more who survived, due to better care) to the present day situation of successful, educated people being more likely to plan their families, and have fewer children. So there are more children who grow up in bad environments. They are not genetically inferior, and do not belong to any particular race. But they may grow up illiterate and never learn to use their potential intelligence. Johnny can't read, but he can still vote when he turns 21. Maybe education will be seen as less and less important as the voting population contains fewer and fewer people who never had an effective education. The cynical among you may say that this is already happening. I'm not saying that the marching morons here, but I think Kornbluth predicted better than you think.

TRANSPORTER
TOPICS

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Number 38

I forgot to mention, last ish, that I passed another Karate test. I am now Third Don. I did poorly on the test, mainly because I had been rattled earlier when being a partner for someone else. I had made a couple of stupid mistakes at the begining of his test and just couldn't regain my composure. Our instructor came around after the test to tell us whether we had passed or not. When he got to me he held up his notes and pointed to a circled number 4. "Do you know what this means?" he thundered. "It will be four more years before I can test again?" I asked weakly. He laughed at this, then told me it was in reference to a footnote. I had passed, but needed to work on my footwork, as well as some other things. After third black you have to wait two years for your next test in our system. I will need every second.

I am trying to finish a chapter a week on my novel. Unfortunately, I am already falling behind. I find it more difficult to transfer the stuff I have already written on another machine and printed out to my home computer than it was to do it in the first place. I keep loosing my place and having to stop and look for which line I am on. Once I get the first seven chapters into the machine I should have an easier time. These chapters will be first draft for the most part, readable but needing polishing. I have found that if I can just sit down and write I can do a chapter in about three hours. My chapters are running around 2500 words each, so that is a lot of writing. The re-writing will come later.

I will try to get this contribution finished before Confederation. If that works out, my review of the con will be in the next issue. Wait for it.

My younger cat is about ten months old now and gives every indication of being a feline giant. He only weighs ten or eleven pounds but is very large. If he fills out as much as his adopted brother he could double his weight. I used to think that neutering a tom meant that it would get fat and lazy. That is not ^{necessarily} so. If they are outdoor cats and get plenty of exercise they get stocky and muscular. My older cat, Taffy, put on about four pounds in the months after his operation and now looks sort of beefy. There isn't an ounce of fat on his body, however. Petting him is like petting a fur-covered brick.

Many of you know that I am a comic book fan. I approach comics the same way I approach fantasy. If it is internally consistent I am willing to suspend my disbelief. I have never read a comic which was good, hard science fiction, but many have approached good fantasy. One of my favorite comics is "Doctor Solar, Man of the Atom" from the middle sixties. The science is about nineteen thirties SF level but at least the attempt was made. It was far more realistic on a human level than even the majority of current comics.

Speaking of superheroes, I have sold an article for the Champions game to Hero Games' house magazine, "Adventurer's Club." It is an organization, the first for the magazine. It is actually my fault that

they are now running organizations; they had asked me to re-write an adventure I had submitted for the magazine as an organization to be used in half of one of their Organizations books. Once they got it they decided it wasn't strong enough to support half a book by itself, but the editor liked it so much that he decided to have me re-re-write it somewhat smaller and in a slightly different format for Adventurer's Club. It will appear in the next issue. Unfortunately, the magazine just underwent a major reorganization and the next issue won't be out for about six months.

The week before my last worldcon, in Anaheim two years ago, I came down with a marvellous case of poison ivy and dislocated my right shoulder. The week before this worldcon I had a vent cover fall on my upper lip at work and have broken the little toe on my right foot by stubbing it on a cardboard box. My lip is already healed and the toe is on the mend, if a bit crooked. Unfortunately, there seems to be some nerve damage. The toe is numb, along with the part of the ball immediately behind it. I am hoping that the numbness will pass with time.

Mailing Comments

Donna: About naming babies, don't pick an unusual variation of a common name. Every afternoon for the past two years my boss has said "See ya, Rodney," to me as he leaves for home. I voted for Cincinnati as first choice. As part of a highschool Psychology class I once took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, which analyzes your personality and recommends appropriate jobs. The results on mine said that I should be in a fire tower out in the woods somewhere, *away from people.*

Linda: I am something of a Japan buff. I even did a paper on their society in a graduate level sociology class. As for the language, I collect Japanese animation and have picked up a few terms from that and my Karate class, as well as trying to learn with tapes and records. It ain't easy, and I usually am pretty good with such things. See above about cats. Guess they're the same the world over. It is interesting to note the use of English words and phrases in Japanese programs. These often show up in signs and computer displays, not always properly.

Eric: I have read the new Superman and like it, with reservations. I can't remember what ship you are on and can't find your previous submission to look it up. I will be better prepared next time. By the way, I hated Paris when I was there two years ago. It stank, was noisy and some of the people were rude. Interesting artwork.

Tim: Are you pacifists or just peaceful? There is a difference.

Valli: My comment about your margins was intended to be humorous. Let's hear it for map fandom! Glad someone out there liked the cartoon.

Barry: Another Beatles fan! Hurray!

Bonnie: You got to watch those dangerous sports. One of the people in my Karate class was out for several weeks after sliding home in a softball game. The Amiga is IBM compatible, or will be once the Sidecar gets on the market.

Guy: Shame on you! Taking the easy way out and buying a Mac! Where's your spirit of adventure? Of exploration? I remember someone in a recent issue of Byte lamenting on the fact that the dream of the desktop mainframe seemed to have been forgotten. Don't know what he means; most of the better micros of today are better than most of the

mainframes of twenty years ago. What theater was this, anyway?

Bill Aitch: Hello, stranger! A good piece of fiction can inspire a lot of people. Just look how Navy registration is up after Top Gun. I don't have the info on Claustrophobia handy. I will try to print the address and editor next time. The excerpt was from "The Commercial Space Report," a zine which Claustro reprints.

Greg: Don't brag too much about the shaking going on out there. The third largest earthquake ever recorded was just across from Kentucky's western border, in New Madrid, in 1812. It stopped clocks all over new England. Another big one is expected there before the end of the century. I used to joke that they couldn't fire me because I was the only one who knew where everything was. Then they decided that they didn't need that particular service any more. Objections to the Shuttle design were voiced during the planning stages but most were hushed up, primarily because of fear of further funding cuts.

Well, here it is, quick and dirty. I am rushing to get this out so I can give it to Greg at ConFederation. No time for proof reading, not that it usually helps. 'Bye.

Rod

SURELY YOU'RE JOKING, MR. RUFFA

an APA-TECH zine
by Barry D. Gehm

OFFICIAL BUSINESS: 1. The New Monthly Schedule. Even though I was one of the people who agitated for more frequent distributions (back when we were quarterly) I am skeptical of the plan for monthly distys. AT#42 arrived on the 15th; that gives me less than two weeks of turnaround time, not really enough even to put mailing comments together. I am making an effort to get this brief contribution in this time, but I doubt I'll be able to very often. I hope it does work, but I have my doubts.

2. Production Values. My copy of AT#42 consisted of about 5 sheets held together by bits of crumpled wire and about 40 loose sheets. Is this a hardware or a quality control problem? Do we need to pitch in for a West Coast stapler?

3. Copy count / new members. I don't want to come across as excessively Calvinistic about this, but I think we should prune the deadwood. I don't see any reason to pay copying costs to make copies for people who haven't dropped a line to the rest of us in more than a year. I say this despite the fact that some of the people who are in line to get dropped are among those I'd most like to hear from, such as John Frambach and Al Duester. Still, if they get motivated they have a chance now and in any case they can always reapply and bump someone else. Specifically, I propose that the copy count be maintained at 30 and new members be accommodated by dropping members who have not maintained minac, in order of length of time since their last submission. I would also like to propose an ex officio exception for the editor(s) of PYRO (and the editors(s) of APA-TECH, if it ever becomes an issue), since I think it is important that Jamie & Gail (or their successors (not soon, I hope)) have access to this channel of information, but they should devote their publishing energies to getting PYRO out on a regular basis (goad, goad). I have a nibble on another new member so any long-time slackers who don't want to get dropped should dust off their typewriters.

PALMER UPDATE: PYRO #38 is finally in the mail. Contrary to previous notices in these pages, David R. Palmer's response to my review of EMERGENCE and my reply to him will apparently not be appearing. Jamie recently informed me that he had decided not to run them, for two reasons: 1. The two letters come to an awful lot of pages of commentary about a page-and-a-half review, and it is questionable whether there would be enough reader interest to justify devoting that much space to the matter. 2. According to at least one professional writer Jamie consulted, responding to negative reviews is generally considered unprofessional and a Bad Idea (so much for "showing a lot of class," Marty), and specifically, Palmer did not come off particularly well in this exchange.

I can't argue with reason #1; I expressed similar doubts at the time I wrote the letter. I think reason #2 is way off base: Jamie is the editor of a fanzine, not Palmer's publicity agent; it's not his job to protect Palmer's reputation from Palmer himself. However, Jamie is the editor of a fanzine, and gets to choose what to print; one good reason is more than enough.

If anybody is interested, I might synopsise the letters here, but I'll wait until I see if there's any demand for more weather reports from that particular teapot.

Also, I misremembered my phone conversation with Jamie about "Stardust Memories": he reprinted it not in PYRO but in the Westercon ("Haileycon") program book.

vis vobiscum,
Barry
26 Aug 86

CRUMBCRUNCHERS, INC.
Susannah West and Dave Powell
P.O. Box 98
Ripley, OH 45167
(513) 392-4549

Initial inanities written by Susannah, aided and abetted by David, using the Tandy 2000 and Multimate. Followed by more profound observations by David.

August 28, 1986

It's 9:20 AM, and a diaperless toddler is sitting on the living room couch, watching "Reading Rainbow." (She's just started in on her negative phase, so "No diapers!" she shouted. Her other favorite phrase is "I want.")

Last weekend was very lively, as the annual Ohio Tobacco Festival took place here. I'd been madly preparing for the quilt show which took place at the same time, and though I occasionally feared I'd never finish, I did get the exhibit I'd planned done. I had some setbacks - for instance, when I discovered that Marlene had scribbled with blue felt-tip pen all over the panel on crazy quilts!

When I first got interested in museums, I knew that designing exhibits was what I really wanted to do. Up to this time, though, the museum jobs I've had have been with the public information offices. I even taught an exhibit design course at Ohio State when I was working on my masters in natural resources, but never had the chance to design an exhibit myself!

This particular exhibit wasn't the type I'd dreamed of - certainly not like a real museum exhibit. To start off with, a tiny museum that's run all by volunteers and has very little money just doesn't offer the possibilities even a little museum does.

(Whoops! I hear the toilet flushing, which means that Marlene has figured out how to flush the toilet! She's been fascinated for quite some time by unrolling toilet tissue and using it to stuff the toilet. And now, if I'm not watchful, she'll be continually trying to add insult to injury by trying to flush the mess! So if you visit us, and find a closed bathroom door, it probably doesn't mean that it's occupied - it just shows that "el destructo" is still on the rampage.)

To continue. Visions of Gatorfoam or Homosote panels with silk-screened letters were replaced by cheap posterboard with hand-lettering. With practice, I was able to produce very readable text, using a Speedball pen nib and India ink. The illustrative watercolors I made pleased me a lot, too, so the finished products looked at least semi-professional. Scrounging through my drawers at home, I discovered a patchwork placemat I'd started to work on, and a couple of pieced quilt blocks. I sacrificed these to the panels on pieced quilts and quilting.

I also made up a little brochure on the quilt-related books in our public library (sample included). Though the local library is very small, the collection of quilt books is phenomenal! I had 200 copies of these photocopied, and about half of them were picked up by visitors.

Though museum members who saw the exhibit warned me not to throw it out after the Festival was over ("We'll use it next year," is their plan), it looked pretty beat up after three days of being on display! I hope that they will spring for a more finished looking version if they do decide to keep it.

The Tobacco Festival has been an annual event for the past five years, after a nearly twenty-year hiatus. When two tobacco warehouses blew down this spring there was serious doubt that the festival would go on this year, but the stockholders of the Ohio Kentucky Warehouse voted to rebuild, and by mid-July, the new warehouse began to go up. Amazingly, it was completely built by Festival time. There seemed to be just as many exhibits, food booths, carnival rides, etc., as always, despite having one less warehouse! (Actually, the flea market was outside this year, and it's usually in a warehouse.)

[Editors Comment: I know the evils of tobacco, but tobacco is very important to the economy of Brown & Adams Counties - It is just about the only thing that has sustained the economy in this area, which has by far the highest unemployment in Ohio. No one smokes in my house! And I really see the community facing up to the possibility that the era of tobacco is just about over. Nevertheless, this is a proud rural community, and tobacco has been a part of this culture for more than one hundred years.]

I invited my sister-and-brother-in-law to come down to take in the Festival. They politely declined, saying that they disapproved severely of tobacco usage. However, though a lot of the Festival is sponsored by tobacco interests, and there are contests for tobacco hand tying, pipe smoking, tobacco spitting, and tobacco worm races, you don't have to pay much attention to these things! For three days, Ripley is almost a bustling metropolis. "Shuttle buses" (tractor-pulled trailers with hay bale seats) go back and forth between the warehouses and town, and practically everybody has company for the weekend. (Our own company never materialized, but they may come down this weekend - which will leave us with the interesting problem of how to put up four houseguests!)

We have been receiving almost weekly mailings from the Boston Computer Society. THE ACTIVE WINDOW, the BCS Mac Newsletter, is a very impressive publication - it looks more like a magazine than a newsletter. Of course, it's done on the Mac, using Mac page layout software and it looks like most, if not all the ads, are done with Mac software too. It uses three or four serif and sans serif faces, which I know the LaserWriter Plus can easily provide (I'm not very good at recognizing typefaces - Helvetica and Souvenir are the only ones I'm always positive about!). In fact, it looks a good bit like we visualize STARWIND (though a lot of STARWIND's artwork will be non-computer-generated). The BCS UPDATE, which arrived yesterday is a monthly MAGAZINE, not a newsletter. Really slick looking, coated paper, color photos, etc. And both these publications have PROFESSIONAL-sounding articles. A big change from our user's group newsletter.

The 9th Northeast Computer Faire sounds like an event worth attending, for those in the New England area (alas that we're not in that category). The advertising we've received says it'll be October 30-November 1 at the World Trade Center in Boston. I've attended a few computer fairs, the most notable the first Softcon in New Orleans two years ago. (I guess Softcon is now defunct.) That was fantastic, even though I was a complete computer neophyte and didn't know what was important to look at or what questions were important to ask. Admission for the computer fair is \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door (a lot better than the Softcon admission of \$30 a person!), the address "Attendee Registration, 9th Northeast Computer Faire, 300 First Ave., Needham, MA 02194."

I pass info like this along in our newsletter under the heading "In the Mailbox." I have no idea, however, if the folks who read the newsletter ever pay any attention to anything in the column. Some months, it's pretty dull, being mostly a listing of seminars that nobody can afford to attend, and mention of new products that we've received brochures for.

We recently received our FICTION WRITER'S MARKET update (we have to mail it back with any additions and/or corrections we care to make if we want to be listed in next year's directory). Included with our listing was a questionnaire to fill out, with some rather thought-provoking questions. One asked, "What new trends have you noticed in fiction during the past year?" And I realized one thing I've noticed is that current events are intruding themselves much more into the sf short stories I read. Things like the concern about AIDS, the Challenger explosion, and the Chernobyl disaster, play more important roles than macho space explorers or bug-eyed monsters.

This leads into how much educational television programming is trying to show the space program in a positive light. Marlene and I have seen the 3-2-1-Contact shows, a Reading Rainbow, and a Newton's Apple that dealt with the shuttle and some of its astronauts and designers. They were filmed before the shuttle disaster, but nevertheless, they're being shown on TV now.

The glimpses of Space Camp that these shows have revealed make me wish I was a kid! Valli's idea of a GT camp for kids is a neat one! (Dave muttered, "I wonder what they'd teach them?" Well, Marlene's already a computer tot who's learned how to destroy files - is that a good start?!)

Her vocabulary includes "pooer" (computer) and mouse. She was fascinated when Dave ran the Macpaint demo disk for her, but irritated that she couldn't do anything to affect the creation of the pictures she saw on the Mac's screen. The typewriter is much more pleasing, because she gets instant results when she strikes the keys. (With the Tandy, she usually manages to lock it up after a few lines of random letters.)

We may be homeowners in the near future, which among other things will mean that we can extend our hospitality to our friends (of course, we do that now, but they often must be content with sleeping on the floor or the couch!). And, not to have STARWIND eating up our dining room and living room will be a special treat. (At one point in time, the Mac sat on the dining room table, which meant that, unless we had company, we didn't have a dining room table.)

House-hunting forces you to think deeply about what you want in a house. There is much fantastic 19th century architecture in Ripley - I know that architecture buffs like Valli would really enjoy seeing the town. Some of the houses are literally mansions, others are more modest. We teetered for the longest time over a fascinating house - built in the 1860s - what looked like an architectural combination of French Second Empire and Queen Anne, if you can visualize that. Brick, with a slate roof, double parlors with sliding glass doors, formal dining room, beautiful winding front staircase and narrow servant's staircase off the kitchen....It was ALMOST affordable, so for an admirer of 19th century architecture, like me, it was irresistible

All this was before we really sat down and considered how much it would take to make the house truly livable. Nevertheless, we experienced BITTER disappointment when we drove by one evening and noticed that the FOR SALE sign had disappeared. (It turned out that the owners had switched Realtors - for the second time - after the house had been on the market for a couple of years, they'd gotten desperate. Houses can be on the market for a lot longer than that around here, though - there are houses around here that are just falling apart and vanishing into a tangle of honeysuckle and saplings, because the owners (usually the heirs, actually) have despaired of ever finding a buyer.)

Some friends purchased a house that was built in the 1840s. It was in very poor shape when they moved in, and they've worked nonstop for over two years. It's a House Beautiful residence now, of course, but they've also spent \$50,000 or \$60,000 at least getting it that way - doing most of the work themselves; if they'd had professional help, they doubtless would have spent much more..

So my question was - are we the type of people who are dedicated to rehabbing a house? And are we willing to live like Gypsies in a barn while we're fixing a place up? The answer to the first question is I don't know. The second answer is definitely not! I spent enough time living like a Gypsy when I was single!

Well, the house we both like is not historical, and though there may be some fixing up work, it wouldn't really fall into the category of rehabbing.

MAILING COMMENTS

555 Times: I do feel I must defend my possible opinion about a monthly schedule. I tried to convey the impression that I thought that participation might decrease, not that it would decrease! (As a person who's always enjoyed writing letters - I have to be, or our phone bill would be outrageous! - I think this is a lot of fun.)

Is the APA mailed first class? (I'm afraid I never really noticed, and I don't think I have an empty envelope around to find out.) I mail sample copies of STARWIND for the magazine rate, and I reckon that APATECH would fall into that category! I can mail a sample copy for \$.98, and it's about the same size as an average APATECH. I don't know how much it would cost me to mail it first class; I've never checked. I do know it would be more. Maybe I'd better mosey over to the post office and find out....I'm just back from the post office, so I'll record this information before I forget it - the magazine I mail out weighs 8 ounces, which would cost \$1.41 to mail first class. Anyway, just a thought.

Donna: Baby names? I'm afraid that the boy's name we had picked out was fairly commonplace - Benjamin William - but they were both family names. As my ancestors are mostly English and German, names like that abound, but I suspect that some genealogical research would turn up some interesting names in anyone's family. (I found a Lon, a Melchior and a Balthazar!)

Linda: I hope to have the opportunity to read more of your insights. Dave and I have a long-standing fascination with the Orient; in fact, Dave has had a book called Japanese as it is Spoken checked out of the Ohio State Library for the last five years! I keep getting overdue notices for it (along with ones for all sorts of books on welding and precious metals) and keep renewing it. I tell him that sooner or later someone is going to want to check it out, and then we'll have to pay a \$.50 a day fine on the thing until we can return it! An American author who lives in Kyoto has sent us numerous stories, and he and I have been corresponding about the state of sf in Japan. What's your impression?

Barry: On Multimate. We chose it because it's similar in so many ways to the Wang word processor. It does have irritating features, the spelling checker being the most irritating, in my opinion. It refuses to recognize capitalized words or words with apostrophes. I too wish I could get a look at the dictionary. I wonder what's there. It doesn't recognize some fairly commonplace words, and does recognize others that I'd think it wouldn't. (We typed in a legal contract, and it found only 19 errors in the entire document. A lot of those words were legalese, like hereunto, etc.!) I think irksome sounds less harsh than irritating, actually. I really is wonderful to have a spelling checker, my comments notwithstanding!

Bill: Enjoyed your reviews of archaic 'sf. Reminds me of some reviews an author sent us of some early 19th century work. After sending this review, he got busy reading some more obscure H.G. Wells and wrote some skimpy reviews of it.

Greg: We've had two minor quakes recently (of course, the one in 1980 wasn't all that minor and it left the Methodist Church with a big crack in the wall up by the altar), but I've managed to miss them both (all the quakes that I've missed seem to have come in the early morning hours). I guess a quake as severe as the one which hit this area in 1812 (I think that's the right date) may be in the offing. As far as organ music goes, right now I'm working on some Henry Purcell, whom I like a lot and (horrors!) the Bridal Chorus and the Wedding March for an October wedding. The prospective bride's only requests were for these numbers and something with chimes in it, as the organ has a carillon. And I was anticipating something difficult and challenging, like the snatch of Star Wars music Steve and Carol Johnson included in their wedding music!

Steve: Sorry I spelled your name wrong last time round! I've added another Fats Waller LP to my collection - the rerelease of the Bluebird recordings he made in 1935 and 1936. Alas that I have no Waller or other black artists in my collection of 78s, though I've searched diligently through the years.

Valli: Maybe if we looked at having kids as a scientific experiment, it wouldn't be as scary. And it is amazing how scientific the whole child-rearing scene can be! (Witness the NOVAS on language development and development of emotions.) I read that a baby's first six words are usually food-related, and it was true - the first several words that Marlene said were ones like apple, bite, orange, etc. The same book said that kids start in on an "explosion" of words at about 18 months, and amazingly she did. I write her words on the calendar, and from only a few words in January, she was up to a couple dozen a month by April, with at least one new word every day. (We heard in passing that the average two-year-old has a vocabulary of 60 words - we figure Marlene probably has upwards of 200!) I still am a bit puzzled about the "Terrible Twos" - when Marlene was 22 and 23 months old, she was willing to sit on the potty, to let me change diapers, or to clean up spills on the floor. Now, these same events often bring on lying down on the floor and kicking with the feet tantrums. How come she really started testing her environment and becoming more independent after she turned two, instead of only a month before?

Marty: You mentioned a while back that you had copies of all the APATECHs since the beginning. I wonder if there's a way we could get a peek at them. Our own collection is rather skimpy - a #1 and a few in the #20s.

Well, enough of my rambling. Donna's "Don't die" admonition is a good one. I'll leave you with Dave's standard, "Keep care."

Thank goodness Susannah decided to relinquish the podium, before the keys on this old machine wore out. eh hem.....Now what was I supposed to talk about? Oh yea. I was reading the Wall Street Journal the other day, [Editor's Comment: Snob! Snob!] Eh Hem!....Any way, I was saying that I was reading an article about the computer industry in which the President of Tandy Corp. stated that they intend to follow IBM's every step so as to maximize the compatibility of the Tandy line of computers. He added that this was because of their terrible mistake with the 2000. I suppose that they plan to follow even if it means going back to the Tandy 2000 key board which is amazingly like IBM's new AT keyboard. Gasp! Why don't these companies make recalls of their mistakes? Anyone in the market for a Tandy Edsel 2000? Sob!..Actually this old piece of junk has been a reliable friend. It won't let me run pirated software even if I wanted to, and all of that unpolished stuff from the public domain really is not necessary.....

I learned my lessons about greener pastures when I watched our rented IBM AT at work need to be replaced twice in a month after destroying utterly our confidence in the machine. We just didn't catch on to the machine having lost a sector here and there until programs started crashing due to gaps in the overlays or data. Still, I am caught in the awkward position of asking some software vendors to rewrite their programs to find my misplaced serial port and moving video memory address....Enough complaining about the Tandy 2000.

We didn't buy the Laserwriter we had hoped to. It was quite a disappointment when I took off from work two hours early and drove 70 miles to meet the man, and when we got there he wasn't. So, his secretary explained that the Laserwriter was her baby, and that all she could do was show it to us. We looked and said, yup, it really is a Laserwriter. Nevertheless, we definitely got the impression that we were not welcome to stay even one moment longer. We left feeling sick. Anyway, we are going to take the more traditional approach and order one new. All's well that ends well, I guess. Sour grapes and all of that. Nevertheless, we will continued undetered on trying to fling the next issue Starwind together, this has taken on a life of its own.

I am going to take my examination for registration as a Professional Engineer in October. This means that I am going to spend the next month or so trying to remember what I have managed to forget for the last five years. I have always been skeptical about tests like this because I felt that these tests encouraged a uniform standard of mediocrity, rather than improving the quality of engineering. I really haven't changed my mind on this, but I have also seen quite a bit of sub-mediocre engineering over the past five years. For that, I guess minimum standards are something that helps to protect the public and that is good.

I have become a student of the utility industry recently, and I feel that some really powerful changes are in the offing. I think an Orbital Solar power satellite might become a reality in our lifetime. This type of prediction might seem like a ringer, like predicting the sun will rise tomorrow; but, I'm thinking of a power station that would be on the same order of magnitude as the one I'm working at now. This excites me intensely. This satellite is my life's dream. I also think I see the obstacles that must be pushed aside, and more importantly how this might come to pass. I'd like to share some of this with you for your comments and insights.

I hear in the news that the push into space has faltered recently due to difficulties in finding a reliable launch vehicle, but I think that the problem is deeper than that. The government has commandeered the shuttle for military and scientific payloads only. I feel that this is because space flight has to be heavily subsidized, and commercial cargoes are designated as lower priority. The problem is that the commercialization of space is not just a luxury. In the long run, the exploitation of space by business activities is the only hope for the human race maintaining a continuous and robust presents in space. I think the key, first and most important major commercial space venture should be the construction of a LARGE solar power satellite.

This is not a minor or whimsical undertaking. To make something like a commercial power satellite possible, a number of technologies, opportunities, and markets must be present. Many people have already concentrated there study on the questions of transmission, speculated generation technologies and sources of raw materials. These are important questions. But, the questions that I have been considering are those of markets for the power generated for the plant and how to obtain the capital required. I feel that these are truly the key questions that must be answered; because, once the driving force is identified and brought to bare, the engineering questions can be chipped away by fanatics like us.

Is a market for solar power developing? I think so. In my mind, I see fusion and solar power as the only new alternatives for meeting the demands of the 21st Century. Our choice of the old technologies is being eroded by genuine, well reasoned concern for the environment, which includes especially concerns about CO and the climate. Concerns that are reasoned, as well as, unreasoned have closed the door on fission based nuclear power for the foreseeable future. And though Fluidized Bed Coal Firing Technology can serve to fill the void, I see fossil fuels as making it possible to obtain cost effective renewable energy resources, not as an end to the search. In the United States, we haven't painted ourselves into a corner on this issue, as they have in Sweden, but the Units (power stations) that are projected to be built in the 1990's are to be smaller oil fired units, because of speed of erection, regulatory pressure, and a myriad of other problems.

Truthfully, our present system of public utility oversight and rate setting is breaking down when it comes to providing for the future. Fortunately, new ways of addressing this problem are on the horizon. But the price is as of yet undetermined. The beginning of the change was signaled by Federal Laws being established during the push for energy self sufficiency in the wake of the 1st Arab Oil Crisis. The concept of small independent producers of electricity was introduced along with a body of laws called the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act of 1978, a.k.a PURPA. This law requires public utilities to purchase power from independent producers (i.e. windmills, low-head dams, solar power test facilities, and mostly cogenerators) at the cost of avoided generation which is a dollar figure which is set by the state Public Service Commissions as best I can tell base on cost data from utilities.

In recent years, though, a new push has begun. This push has come from two fronts. The first and most important front is manned by the consumers and activist groups who have begun to fight and win battles to exclude the incredible cost overruns of nuclear construction and the costs for canceling new fossil units from the rate base. This has put the utilities in an awkward position because environmental regulations and the permitting process has extended the time to construct new generation facilities. In the long run, this means that the utility companies have decided to take the tack of not building new generation plants, and when they do the plan to build small units which don't require large coal, ash, and scrubber sludge handling facilities, right now this means oil fired units.

The second front has been created by the Federal Government via the PURPA regulations, relaxing restraints on utility holding companies, and encouraging competition between utilities. This is as, so often happens, a step into the past. In the 20's, 30's and even in to the 40's, independent producers contributed as much as 25% of the electric power available. It wasn't until the utilities were set up as monopolies that cogenerators stopped providing power as a normal course of business. In those days, the economies of scale far outweighed the cost of building bigger more efficient plants. Now, only a very few of the utility companies are even contemplating adding more new plants. The industry's focus has shifted to trying to extend the life of the currently operating plants.

So, what does all of this have to do with a Solar power station? Power generation units cost about as much to build today as a modern aircraft carrier each. This is the same order of magnitude that would be required for constructing a solar power station in orbit. But who would invest in such a venture? What utility would take the risk given the same promises that put were forward in the dawn of the nuclear age, namely a high cost plant that costs very little to operate? The obvious choice of the past is the Federal Government as in the Tennessee Valley Authority. In the world of tax reform and budget cuts, this may not be an acceptable avenue in the future. The utilities, maybe, but the nature of the risks might not be attractive to the utility industry already burnt once. Any one of the big corporations might be enticed into such a venture if the opportunity for a return is there, if a market exists. Or, maybe Japan, Sweden, or ??? might decide to find a new method of upsetting the U.S. balance of trade. I don't know.

If power becomes available from major sources that are not regulated utilities, how is it going to sold to the public? PURPA does as much harm as good in its present state because it doesn't differentiate between good and poor sources of power, or encourage independent generation to be available when its needed rather than when its not. What could occur as a refinement to PURPA is the exciting thing that I see in the governments actions. This trend is also borne out in the way that Rural Electric Cooperatives and Municipal Power Companies are making in roads into traditional utility service areas. In the short term, this activity can and will remove cause major customers to re-evaluate their traditional relationships with their power companies, and the development of a commodities style power market. In the long term, this development will lead to companies other than utilities looking into how to get into the business of supplying power. They can, if the opportunity and technology are there, look at the riskier more innovative approaches to generating power. This is when and where I hope the suggestion of the solar power alternative gets its day in the sun.

Enough for now on that topic. Maybe more than enough! Anyway, I saw Aliens yesterday, white knuckles and awe.....I really think this sequel outdid the original. Only criticisms are.....an unpiloted military ship with a single platoon of Marines?.....Ripley stronger than an alien in an explosive decompression?.....annoying but I think this falls under the category of willingful suspension of disbelief.

555 Times: Donna - Hooray for the nursery... Helium balloons, baby sitters, and an all around friendly environment at Marcon this year was such a breath of fresh air that it is hard to describe our sense of relief. Youngins are a lot of fun, they teach you about yourself, but at an adults only event they are hell! We were very active in the small business SIG of the Cincinnati IBM users group, but we haven't attended a meeting since MR could walk because the environment at the meetings included no place for kids, and its no fun trying to sit with a toddler in a hallway for a couple of hours.

From Between Time and Space: Linda - As Zannah pointed out, I have been fascinated by Japan and learning Japanese, I really look forward to hearing about your adventures. One of the biggest barriers that I encountered in trying to learn Japanese out of a book is that you really can't do it. Demoralized, and held away from taking courses in the subject at school by 20 credit hour quarters made of 3 cr.hr. courses to graduate, I have had to subsist on dreaming.

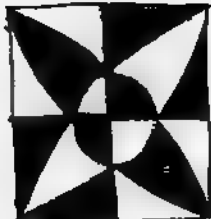
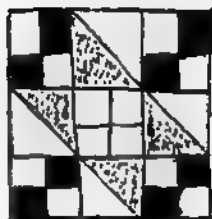
Late Nights All Alone...: Barry - I essentially agree with you on Multimate, but I have to add that other spelling checkers may not be much better. Specifically, Tandy withheld the spelling checker in the version specifically developed for the Tandy 2000. One year and a half later we received an updated version of Multimate with Houghton Mifflin's 78,000 word spelling checker. Sure enough, it has the same problems that you pointed out so graphically, arrgggg!

Letter from Easton: Guy - I absolutely must agree with you on the Mac. We have a 512K Mac and I was considering an 800K disk drive, thanks for the note of caution. We can't afford a Laserwriter either, but somehow I don't think that that will stop us.

There Is No Footnote 2: Mr. W. Skeffington Higgins - I am fascinated by Micromegas and Auf Zwei Planeten I hope to get a chance to read them. Fan GoH, my my my my my.... I have to state that the IBM PC and the Mac came out as little more than rocks during their respective births, they were refined to usefulness only after years of people buying them and watching the next better model come out. Yuk! what a way to run a picture show. We just installed a Prime 9950 at work and the software available doesn't hold a candle to some of the poorest consumer grade software for the micros. By that yardstick, the micros are a much better value bugs and all.

Lift My Lamp....: Greg - We really hope that you will avoid the all of the swings of the scythe I read with fascination about the projects that you are working on. I must confess a terrible ignorance of the state of affairs in the area of current launch vehicles, I am slowly turning my interest in the state of space technology. I have been spending the last five years at the power station just getting acquainted with the power generating industry. We visited the Dayton Air Show this year, and I was shocked to see how similar the exhaust cone of a Shuttle Main Engine is to our boiler waterwalls, the major differences being that the Shuttle Engine exhaust cone runs at lower temperatures and pressures. I was surprised about the techniques that were used to repair and hydro (leak) test these "hydrogen wall" tubes. This engine, built by Rockwell Int. is never tested at full pressure after its 1.2 times leak test, by the statements of their representative. It is only tested at 35 psi using nitrogen thereafter. I guess the question that comes to mind is...Is this the truth or just the ignorance of the Rockwell rep? Any comments?

Keep care all of you.



Learn more about quilts at your local library. The following books can be found at the Union Township Public Library, 27 Main St., Ripley, OH (513-392-4871).

QUILTS AND THEIR HISTORY

American Quilts and Coverlets by Florence Peto
American Patchwork Quilts by Lenice Bacon
Amish Crib Quilts by Rachel Pellmen
A People and Their Quilts by John Irwin
Crazy Quilts by Penny McMorris
Quilts from the Indiana Amish by David Pottinger
A Treasury of American Quilts by Cyril Nelson

MAKING YOUR OWN QUILTS

Lap Quilting with Georgia Bonesteel by Georgia Bonesteel
Beautiful Patchwork and Quilting Book edited by Val Jackson
Let's Make a Quilt by Jessie MacDonald
American Quilts and How to Make Them by Carter Houck
120 Patterns for Traditional Patchwork Quilts by Maggie Malone
A Garden of Quilts by Mary Johnson
The McCall's Book of Quilts by the editors of McCalls
Not Just Another Quilt by Sarah Gobes
The Quilting Primer by Dorothy Frager
The Complete Book of Machine Quilting by Robbie Fanning
The Sunbonnet Family of Quilt Patterns by Delores Hinson

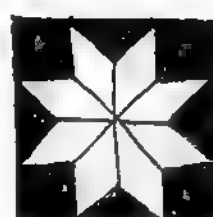
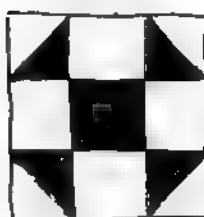
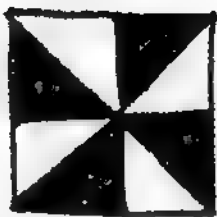
CONTEMPORARY QUILTING

Contemporary Quilting by Sharon Robinson
The Mountain Artisans' Quilting Book by Alfred Lewis
Woman's Day Prize-Winning Quilts, Coverlets and Afghans edited by Julie Houston

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Union Township Public Library Hours

Monday - Thursday	12:00-5:00 6:30-8:30
Friday	12:00-6:00
Saturday	10:00-4:00
Sunday	1:00-5:00



ALL WE ARE SAYING IS
"GIVE PEACH A CHANCE!"

Gregory Ruffa
10380 Maya Linda Rd., Apt. C-303
San Diego, Calif. 92126
(619)-695-8647

I'm back from Atlanta now and have returned to a disturbingly quiet workplace. There are about a third as many people sitting over in Flight Mechanics as there were two months ago. Many are now working for other departments in Space Systems Division over at one of our buildings in a nearby office park called Century Park (also called the "Crystal Palace," for its glass-curtain architecture). Some are now downtown at our superannuated Lindbergh Field plant, near the airport. Several have defected to Martin Marietta in Denver, where they're hiring like crazy. A few have been laid off. They tell us things are stable for now. Actually, we'll have problems no matter what happens next year. If we *don't* get a contract to build "medium launch vehicles," which are in the Atlas to Titan class range, we'll have to let still more people go and the Division may have to be reabsorbed back into Convair. If we *do* get the contract and other business, we will be seriously short of experienced people to handle the work (but at least there'll be more money coming in). We'll know what's going to happen to us by February.

I should be safe until the end of the year. The internal grant for Mars mission research I'm working under ends on December 31st, whether the money is all used up or not. There may be more Martian stuff in our future, though. NASA is going to be coordinating a study of manned Mars missions at Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, starting in January. They have let out a request for proposals; we are finishing the final draft of ours right now. If we get in on this, GD will be setting up an office out there. The one small problem is that they can't find many people who want to move to Huntsville: Cordell doesn't want to go, I don't want to go. There may be some work on Mars continuing here next year, but that will depend on how all of this works out.

The cover I made (very quickly) for the last APA-TECH is already obsolete. I discovered the Wednesday before the Astrodynamics Conference that the ships required to perform the maneuvers I'd worked out are unreasonably larger than doing the missions with all-chemical propulsion (they'd be much faster, but also much too expensive). Since this undermined one of the claims of our abstract, I had to quickly withdraw the paper, which meant skipping the Conference altogether. So I didn't get to Williamsburg or to Newport News to see Kip and Cathy. I had to settle for going to Atlanta for free. Through some strange arithmetic which only corporate travel agents understand, the portions of my tickets which were now refunded, even with the penalties, somehow still covered my round trip from here to Atlanta and back. So now there was absolutely no business component to my itinerary; the company still paid for the trip. I ought to not go to professional conferences more often...

The paper, meanwhile, will probably be finished this month and submitted for publication to the *Journal of the Astronautical Sciences*. Since I had to redesign my Mars ships, the acceleration that the ion engines can give them changes, which changes their trajectories, which changes the amount of propellant they need, which changes the ships' weights, which changes the acceleration... I'm in the midst of the second iteration now and it looks like the process is converging, so I should be

done with the computational parts in another couple weeks. I'm also working on another document back at Flight Mechanics on the trajectory designs for our next (and last) three Atlas/Centaur launches. Since I did a lot of the optimization work for those missions, I get to write about what I did; they'd like that done this month, too. I'm still Publications person for the local section of AIAA, so I'm busy doing flyers for our meetings and events and am proofing the boards for the September issue of the newsletter (which, fortunately, is only quarterly). Now I need something new to write about for **Pyro**. The Hanrahans have indicated that they'd like to get the next issue out around Thanksgiving for Loscon.

* * *

I flew out to Atlanta the Friday before the convention started to spend a few days with the Hartkopfs. Dr. Bill is on the faculty of the Astronomy Department at Georgia State University; I know him from when we were graduate students at the University of Illinois. His work is in the field of speckle interferometry; with this technique, it is possible to resolve point-like light sources nearly to the theoretical limit of the telescope. He and the people he works with are busily resolving close binary stars with separations as small as 0.03 arcseconds and determining orbits for the pairs. This resolution is a factor of 30 or more improved over what was possible before "speckling." Consequently, they have a huge number of new stars they can analyze. Actually, since the campus was on break before the fall semester, not much was going on, so we had lots of time to talk. We went to see **Aliens** on Sunday at the bargain matinee; I'll review it for **Pyro**, though you've probably all seen it by now. (There's the scene where Sigourney Weaver is telling the "Company" board about the **Nostromo** disaster, which they blandly dismiss as hyperbole; Bill dubbed it "Ripley's Believe It or Not.") Evenings after dinner, I helped cut up a crate of monster peaches (they came from -- that's right, South Carolina! Georgia's crop got clobbered by the drought.) which the Hartkopfs turned into peach jam and conserve and chutney and cobbler. So I had my state-mandated serving of peaches during my visit.

Bill dropped me off at the Marriott on Wednesday afternoon. Staying in my rooms during the convention were Rolf and Mary Wilson, Bill-Aytch, Cap'n Al, Dave Levine, Doug Hosto, and sometimes Lisa Golladay. The convention was all right, but not the best Worldcon of recent memory, to my mind. Features that were nice touches were the giant message board, where a red pin next to your name meant you should look in the file box under your last initial for your message, and the closed-circuit convention channel on the hotel TV system, where you could watch the Hugos and the masquerade from your own room (as well as some surprise programming, like all the Fleischer **Superman** cartoons!). The general programming was standard convention fare and the film and video programs were nothing special. ChUSFA ran the Trivia Bowl with the usual finals of Chicago vs. Chicago, with Mother Hitton's Littul Kittons taking the championship once again. We didn't get much help from the convention at large, so we had to do all our own publicity, with the result that we didn't get much of an audience through the whole show; the gaming chairman was very helpful to us, though, and saw to it that we got whatever assistance we needed. Ah, well... We dined at a number of fine (and so-so) places right around the hotels. The Economic Suicide Squad, in its guise as the Out-of-State (Illinois) Dining Society, did a splendid job on its budget at Nikolai's Roof atop the Hilton, a true five-star restaurant featuring Continental cuisine with Russian specialties. The party consisted of Bill-Aytch, Rolf'n'Mary, Dave Marquart, Jeff Sekiya, Jerry Corrigan, Janice Morningstar, and myself. A fine evening in all, even if Higgins did find the ant that got us a free bottle of wine (using a live ant really made it, Bill!).

woops More later. Go see the **Exhibition of Computer Animation** if it comes to your town: lotsa neat stuff by Digital Productions, Ohio State, etc. Bye.

MAILING COMMENTS

APA-TECH 42

First, a final comment on #41:

Cover This represents a significant system upgrade to the cover for issue #1. I was looking through back issues for some old cartoons (Jamie isn't the only grave robber...) and noted that circuitry is second in popularity, as a cover theme, to spaceships. To wit (along with others of interest):

- issue #1 -- printed circuit (?)
 - 3 spaceship in starfield
 - 4 "scorpion" spaceship over mystery base
 - 5 spaceship over planetary landscape
 - 6 view from relativistic starship
- 7 freighter ships from **Silent Running** near Saturn
- QS 6:** Viking lander with birthday cake
- 8 bandersnatch
 - MuBetan:** ships with floating city
 - Martian Monologue:** man and rover in Martian landscape
- 10 armed Kzinti
- 11 future rocket lift-off (for Spaceships issue)
- 12 Jupiter color photo
- 13 orbiting birthday cake, under construction
- 14 "Sagittarius" spaceship model
- 15 ship escaping planetary doom
- 16 view aboard space elevator
- 17 color repro of Dexter Dickinson spacescape painting with spaceship
- 18 **MuBetan:** circuit diagram
- 19 the infamous "Raman candles"
- 20 fully invertible cover
- 21 APA-TECH rocket truck
- 23 the "Mongolian watermelon" cover
- QS 24:** "birthday IC"
- 27 Special Micro Issue cover: title as IC
- 28 robots-only cantina (for Robots issue)
- 33 the "Baby Ruth" tapestry with Halley's Comet's return
- 36 map of Ye Land of APA-TECH
- 38 control room scene, presumably aboard spaceship
- 39 **Variety** front page
- 40 The Bear'n'Billy Show
- 41 VLSI cover

When we reach issue #50, I'll try to remember to do an index of cover art for the APA and included 'zines.

Back to the issue at hand...

555 Times [Shalmaneser sez:] An alarmist note! Not **only** is this APA now all "xerox"-reproduced, it is on the verge of being **completely** word-processed. We're becoming just sickeningly professional!! I thought this was an AMATEUR press association...

Donna I wish you and Tullio the best with the wonderful terror of raising children. If you're stuck for ideas on children's names, many dictionaries have an appendix with lists of masculine and feminine names and their derivations. You might even look at names in the phone directory. ("Tell me, young man, how did you come to be called 'A-1 Locksmith Proni'?")

"Don't die" is a nice sentiment, if a somewhat curt way of putting it. That reminds me of a story I heard about the time Groucho Marx met Charlie Chaplin shortly after the latter was knighted by Queen Elizabeth (this was back in the late Seventies). As Groucho described the encounter, "He kept saying to me, 'Stay warm, stay warm.' "

Linda Gosh, this APA is just sloppin' over with *sensei*. It occurs to me that we now have at least five people here who know some Japanese. (I'm becoming more strongly tempted to do the **パパ・チェック** cover I've had in mind for a while...) This all seems quite in keeping with developments in the latter third of this century.

I'm certainly interested to read about your experiences with living in Japan. Would you be willing to discuss how you met your husband and came to move there?

I'd asked you to send me the Kanji for your name and address, then realized that the little stamp at the end of your 'zine says "Matsushita" [pine tree, below].

Eric Your description of Europe sounds as whirlwind as your tour. How much time do you get on leave each year to travel around?

Tim From your soliloquy, it is clearer to me now that some people must join the military to find out if they are military people. What would you like to do after you're discharged?

Valli One of the reasons why people can get through school without learning anything important is that so little of our culture reinforces the value of learning. In a lot of homes, it seems little is done to encourage children to study, other than to emphasize that homework is a chore which needs to be completed regularly, regardless of what is to be learned. Many parents also seem to treat school as an institution for baby-sitting children seven hours a day. We need to change some of the basic precepts of American society or the technical elite we've been worrying about could emerge by default.

Hey, watch who yer callin' "over the hill"! (Jes' cuz my joints tell me the humidity, barometric pressure, an' five-day forecast...) I think Doc Consolmagno and I are the old men in this APA: he's about a year older than me and I'm eight months older than Higgins. As for that Barry feller -- darn punk KID!!

Darn punk kid I just **knew** when I thought up that 'zine title that my name would be "Mud", thanks to you.

I enjoyed your subheadings. Must be that finely-tuned receptivity to potential 'zine titles. (Sounds like that qualifies as a marginal "superpower." Rolf and I once talked about what sorts of obscure or bizarre abilities we'd want to possess. He wants the power to control the Background Music...)

OK, Chief, we browbeat Higgins successfully. (Boy, is **he** ever contrite!) Who's our next target?

I can just picture that canoe armada wending its way down the river.
 "Stroke, stroke, stroke... BAIL, BAIL, BAIL!"

Your comet piece (not to be confused with a comet sample) has also been published by Jamie and Gail in the Halleycon program book. Looks like you should have pressed for residuals...

The thing that disturbs me about spelling checkers and your proposed grammatical and syntactical checkers (which were available in 2003 for your Cray-4 PC) is that they provide even less motivation for people to learn to write in their native tongue, much less to learn how to write an interesting composition, which the machine will not be capable of (until at least 2005...).

Your exasperation with NASA, I am learning from my readings, seems to be well-founded. The manipulation of technical information is just one of the signs of how far the managerial bureaucracy had encroached into the policy- and decision-making processes. ("The space program has come of age and may already be senile...") The Administration's recent decisions do not promise to make things any better, in my view.

I take deadlines very seriously. Every time I see one coming, I drop back and punt.

Bruce Cordell is the principal investigator for the internally-funded research work that General Dynamics is doing on manned Mars missions, when his department, Operations Research, lets him do any work on it. His doctorate is in planetary science from the University of Arizona (I'm not sure how he landed up here) and his stay in Tucson overlaps that of Guy Consolmagno. (Guy may chime in with some Cordell stories...) He also speaks (evangelizes?) on going to Mars all over Southern California (recently at Spaceweek here and at the Griffith Observatory in L.A.). He has an article in the July *Sky and Telescope*, which he started writing about two years ago. (There, now you know more about him than you do about me. But then, the same goes for me...)

Perhaps I fell down on the job by not getting on TV and downplaying the Shuttle Plutonium Menace. We didn't see the Tuck item until some time after the editorial was aired. I've never taken televised editorial rebuttals seriously, anyway. Back East, I'd sometimes see one if I happened to be up between two and five AM. I don't feel the need to share my opinions with a miniscule audience of insomniacs and house pets.

Your comment about smuggling H-bombs reminded me of a wonderfully paranoid piece of speculation written by Stewart Alsop about fifteen years ago. He described a scenario in which the Communist Chinese send 25 H-bombs inside containerized cargo-loads of seafood. They are driven from ports to the hearts of our 24 largest cities. (One failed to reach its destination when the truck developed problems on the road, a patrol officer got nosy, and the whole vehicle was blown up to hamper investigation.) After the bombs' detonations, the U.S., stunned by the attack and astonished that it failed to see the incoming missiles, launches its retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union. The Russians respond and "some cities suffered the ignominy of being destroyed twice over." The Chinese emerge as leaders of the post-holocaust world. I guess I found it pretty scary at the time to remember the article so well. I doubt the Chinese would do so well now: they're targets like the rest of us.

I wouldn't worry about being superseded by robotics just yet. I saw a Teddy Ruxpin lunch box at Gemco the other day and Higgins appeared nowhere upon it. (Alternatively, here's a great new rumor: not only is Barry being replaced by Teddy, but Bill is to be supplanted by Max Headroom...)

Bonnie The students you describe sound pretty typical to me. I think secondary school conditions most students to look at studies as the fulfillment of a set of narrowly-defined assignments, instead of the opportunity to become acquainted with and gain understanding of the ideas of a field. They reach college

wanting someone to tell them what to learn, so they can go out and get a job. This can't be of much value in an age where they probably won't have a particular job more than five to ten years before they'll be forced to move on.

As for gaining knowledge for its own sake, of course nothing's wrong with it; some people just think you're weird for doing it. I can remember one girl in high school seeing me reading some text and asking, "Is **that** for a class?" I said something like, "No, I just want to read it." She made a sort of grimace and said, "What for?"

Guy C. *gasp* You've thrown over the old Smith-Corona?! The one that served you faithfully through so many Irwin T. Lapeer stories? Surely the end of an era has come!

I'm not as down on the Macintosh as I was a year ago. Of course, now it's a much better machine. I prefer the Amiga for the features it has that are not otherwise available in that price range. I consider it a real bargain for what I want to do on a small computer. It'll be bigger next year, when I plan to bump it up a couple megabytes. The various add-ons are still coming down in price, which is encouraging. I'm afraid it'll be a while before laser printers get down to \$500, though.

I quite agree that we lead "fantasy lives" here in America. I'm sure at least ninety percent of the human race would look at me in disbelief if I told them what I do for a living, how much I get paid for it, and what I do in my spare time. Most of us here have little cause for genuine complaint.

Golly, I wanna come over for a visit and try out your Celestron 14. I tend to think of portable 'scopes in the 12" to 14" range as the upper crust of amateur observing, though you'll find the occasional amateur with homemades up to 24" in aperture. That's too much for just fun -- you can gag on all the stuff you can see by going down to seventeenth magnitude!

You certainly top my cinematic flood story (but I'll tell it anyway). My cousin Chuck and I went to see *The Empire Strikes Back* or some such. We noted on the way through the theater that one of the corridors had sodden carpets and that water was dripping from the ceiling. We sat down, the movie began, then halted abruptly about ten minutes later. The manager came in and announced that they'd have to close the theater, as the sprinkler system had ruptured and would need repairs. To confirm this, more water was coming down behind him and fire trucks (which were summoned automatically) were looming outside. The issuance of "rain checks" was delightfully appropriate.

Bill Weh-heh-hell, nice to hear from you again! I guess Barry and I can lay off you for a couple months now. I appreciate reading about the work you're doing for the Space Center, especially as it may be another year before I get to see it.

Swift's reference to the two Martian moons predates Voltaire's by about twenty-five years. The explanation I've heard for this "prophecy" is that the author needed a number for how many moons to give Mars. Earth has one and Jupiter had four (the Medicean Stars, which we now call the Galilean satellites), so Swift filled in the missing term in the series. His numbers for the distances and orbital periods of the moons are hopelessly inconsistent with Kepler's Laws (which were already known for a century) for any possible value of the mass of Mars. You can bet Hal Clement wouldn't have let that happen...

I had a thought about another topic for SF scholarship. Stories about people travelling into the heavens or outer space go back about a couple thousand years. After reading your notes, I was wondering how far back one can find stories about people from other worlds (not places like Mount Olympus) coming to visit us.

The remark by Voltaire on the date being "July 5, 1737, new style" is a reference, more than likely, to the recent adoption of the Gregorian (or, more properly, Clavian) calendar, which was gradually supplanting the Julian throughout

Europe over the course of that century. Russia was the last big holdout, finally having to jump the date forward about thirteendays in 1918. (The Eastern Orthodox Church has never accepted the new calendar, which is why "Russian Easter" comes two weeks after ours.)

The Sheep Look Up by Brunner is another book with a lot of aspects of future life that became disturbingly real. From internal clues, it is clear that the story takes place in the early to mid-1980s. It also features a President who is an ex-actor ("Of course -- he has to look good on television!") and spends almost as much time in Hollywood as in Washington. He is quoted here and there in the book; he generally answers journalists' questions on vital issues with a ready quip.

Kid, if ya wanna be really "inside," you can call "the Institute" simply "the 'Tute." As an MIT filksong from sometime around the Twenties put it, it's the place where you "go off on a technological toot." Of course, if you use that phrase too much, real Techmen are going to want to see your Brass Rat...

I'm told that the sets in **Real Genius** are not on the actual campuses where the outdoor scenes were shot, but are meticulous replicas of the dorm rooms, corridors, labs, etc. The fellow who sits across from me at work told me the names of the two colleges used in the location shootings. I've forgotten the names, but they're in central California.

You need a Boswell[®] to chronicle your life, since you don't have the time to do it. Along the lines of Barry's writing checkers, I envision a robot amanuensis who follows you about, noting your *bon mots* and duckings in rivers, and relates them automatically in your best **APA-TECH** style -- it even does witty parenthetical insertions and slash-outs!

I note from some of your remarks (we wrote nearly the same comment to Marty) that we are starting to think more nearly alike. Good gosh! You're becoming as hard-bitten and cynical as I am! Watch it.

Oh sure... OK, fine! Make fun of my buying an Amiga. See if I let you play with **The Halley Project** when you come over...

I am sending for a copy of **Less Than Words Can Say** from a remainders shop I do business with. I'll let you know...

I agree that "monkeys typing Hamlet" isn't absolutely impossible. The point Kittel objects to is that the protons in the typewriters keep decaying while we're waiting around. (And it's so hard to get parts for these 10^{100000} -year-old models...)

The yellow caution diamonds are yet another example of a symbol for which the meaning has been eroded by excessive repetition. A lot of the messages contained therein aren't even cautionary any more (at least I don't think so). In fact, I saw one the other day that wasn't even yellow. They're now just cute things to hang in your rear window. (Ah, today I did see a "Child Driving" one...)

"His destiny was to die in poverty and disappointment." Alas, such was the likely fate of the first folk-singer on the Moon. "He lived in penury for lack of an audience and his music went unheard for lack of air..."

Rod It's unclear when any major modifications to the existing Shuttle will be incorporated, if ever. No one's talking about that right now, since they're still trying to figure out where to get money to build a copy of the first-generation vehicle. Under our system as it has become today, major design changes are very difficult to make: they take years and cost plenty. When money is already tight, don't count on seeing departures from the tried-and-true on an existing system. In any case, the present Shuttle system is to phased out around 2002.

Changing Shuttle computers and avionics wouldn't help much. The contemporary stuff is lighter and faster, but electronics doesn't make up much of the orbiter's weight to begin with. You'd have snappy, state-of-the-art devices, but they wouldn't improve flight operations significantly.

"Are there any Saturn-Vs lying around anywhere?" That phrase is awfully well-chosen: that's exactly what they're doing.* Unfortunately, I think none of them

* see the August/September 1986 issue of *Technology Review*

are flightworthy -- no one's been maintaining them, after all. There are apparently a dozen or so F-1 engines in storage and the production line could be started up to make new, improved ones. It's more likely, though, that we'll get a new sort of heavy-lift vehicle somewhere around 1995 (can ya stand waiting nine years?).

I agree that SDI cannot be dismissed out of hand. I don't dispute that some version could be made to do some job along the proposed lines. What I must object to is that the investigation of feasibility is **not** divorced from the likelihood of its deployment (since when do humans develop weapons technologies and **not** use them?) and that these instruments are being sold as a panacea to the ills of modern warfare. I don't restrict my anger to this government. The Soviets are on the same road and seem just as blind to the problems they are going to create in another generation.

The opponents who said that the technical requirements of the component devices were impossible simply didn't know how close we already were to attaining them. I don't doubt we can do most of the things SDIO would like -- none of them are **physically impossible**. I don't think we're close at all, though, to making SDI work as a **system**. I also believe it will put us farther away from solving the human problem of war.

The "technological spin-off" argument is just as specious when applied to SDI as it is when applied to the space program. More progress would be made in other fields if the money were put directly into basic research. Some of those devices don't have much use **except** as weapons.

It is interesting to think about the effect of reversing the column headings on the "Mantracks" chart. After all, the scientific statements can seem just as dogmatic (as they **must** seem to the creationists, who don't understand how science works). The important difference, of course, is that the scientists can point to a self-checking line of reasoning, whereas the creationists only use their interpretations of selected passages in a single ancient book. Moral: if one claims to despise what Those People do, one must take care not to rely on citations of "authority" as a substitute for contemplation.

Susannah / It is becoming my contention that the Fourth of July can only properly
Dave be celebrated in small towns, after reading your description.

I'm not too disturbed that your English friends didn't know who Jefferson was. "Name three 19th-Century British Prime Ministers." I've found that history texts here are likewise limited as to how much detail of other nations' histories is covered. Some of that is American chauvinism and a lot is just the limitation of available time -- it takes long enough to learn our own history well. Except for Americanophiles, even well-educated Britons probably only know our more historically important Presidents. How many of our forty Presidents do you figure most Americans can **name**, much less place in their proper period?

"Oh, that notorious West woman! To think of a married woman in our community using her maiden name. It's **scandalous!**" When I was a kid, I didn't understand the convention of a woman using her husband's surname; I still think it's odd. (Of course, you're probably using your **father's** surname, but you have to start somewhere...)

I think it would be a valuable service to the community to have "libraries" established which loan out baby clothes. The borrowing family would be responsible for returning the clothing clean and in good condition; most librarial procedures would be followed. Fees would be used to add more and newer, more fashionable items to the collection.

Guess I'll miss the coal-fired, 2200 MW Berserker. I haven't been to a power plant since I got to see one of the nuclear stations in southern New Jersey about 22 years ago. (A disappointing visit -- I didn't glow or mutate or nothin'...)